

## Oshima Noh Theater Centennial Performance and the Value of the Theater

By Yukio Kamekawa  
Chairman, Hiroshima Kensho no Kai

translated by Nancy H. Ross

In eastern Hiroshima Prefecture lies the city of Fukuyama, with a population of 470,000. About 1 kilometer south of Fukuyama Station is the Kita School Oshima Noh Theater. Although it was destroyed in the firebombing of Fukuyama just before the end of World War II, the theater was rebuilt twice by Hisami Oshima, the third generation of the family's Noh performers. He was convinced that Noh could not be promoted in outlying regions without a Noh theater, no matter how small. Though it has received no support or recognition from the City of Fukuyama or Hiroshima Prefecture, the Oshima Noh Theater is a valuable asset to them as well as to the Kita School of Noh.

The theater, the only privately owned Noh theater, was originally built nearly 100 years ago in April 1914 by Hisatarō Oshima, the second generation of the family's Noh performers. A special performance marking the centennial of the theater's founding was held slightly early on Dec. 22. An audience of 400, including people from England as well as throughout Japan, packed the theater for the performance, the 236<sup>th</sup> in the theater's history.

The theater's regularly scheduled performances began in March 1958 with *Yoroboshi* featuring Hisami Oshima and *Funa Benkei* featuring Roppeita Kita, the 16<sup>th</sup> head of the Kita School. Because performers must be brought in from out of town, costs are comparatively high, and the performances almost certainly lose money. Nevertheless the theater has continued to put on four or five performances a year for more than 55 years, a record unmatched by any other privately staged series of performances in any school of Noh.

On November 3, the Chugoku Shimibun's Chugoku Cultural Award was at last awarded to Masanobu Oshima, the fourth generation of the family's performers, in recognition of his achievements over the years and the efforts of the entire Oshima family to promote Noh. And on December 7 it was announced that the Hosei University Noh Drama Prize in Memory of Kanze Hisao had been awarded to the Oshima Noh Theater. I was, quite frankly, pleased that the two prizes coincided with the centennial.

The centennial program featured performances of *Tokusa* with Masanobu Oshima, *Bōshibari* with Mansai Nomura, and *Shakkyō* with Akio Shiotsu and Teruhisa Oshima. Six *shimai* dances were also performed, making for an unusual program. The splendid cast of *Tokusa*, a rarely performed *hikyoku*, featured two living national treasures: Tadao Kamei on hip drum and Akiyo Tomoeda as the lead performer of the chorus.

*Tokusa*, one of the so-called *omonarai* plays that performers cannot undertake until reaching an appropriate age, is the story of a reunion between a father and his young son. The *monogurui* (crazed) old man dons his son's robe and dances. The sight of the weeping father created an atmosphere that differed from that of Noh plays featuring a reunion between a mother and child and was even more poignant. The combination of the dignified carriage and dancing of Masanobu, 71, and his adorable grandson, Iori, 5, in the role of the son made for a wonderful, affecting performance.

Accustomed to playing in the Noh theater, Iori sometimes begs to have the platform brought out so he can practice the lion dance from *Shakkyō*. And when he has time, he watches performances by his father and grandfather on DVD and imitates them. I sense promise in the sixth generation of the Oshima family.

The *han-noh* (abbreviated style of performance) featuring the lion dance from *Shakkyō* lasts less than 20 minutes, but it is a celebratory play that was perfectly suited to marking the theater's centennial. Akio Shiotsu, 69, was the white lion, while the red lion was performed by Teruhisa Oshima, 37, the fifth generation of Noh performers in the Oshima family. Teruhisa has studied under Mr. Shiotsu for 20 years, and the two were perfectly synchronized and displayed sharp footwork and movements in this dance of father and son lions. I was amazed when I saw Mr. Shiotsu, who was not the least bit winded, leap onto the platform in the *anza* (cross-legged) position. The sounds, *ma* (pauses) and *kakegoe* (calls) of the *tsuyu no hyōshi* and *ranjo* of the musicians (Shintaro Sugi on flute, Ichiro Kissaka on shoulder drum, Hirotsada Kamei on hip drum and Mitsunori Maekawa on stick

drum) were truly superb. So, although the performance was short, it was very exciting.

I have been watching Noh performances for 50 years and have known the Oshima family for 20 years. I have also visited about 60 Noh theaters all over Japan, but I know of no other Noh theater that is as pleasant as the Oshima Noh Theater. During regular performances, Yasuko Oshima, Masanobu's wife, is attentive to patrons' needs, and the hospitality of the entire family is infused with cheerfulness and warmth. The facility also has several other features not found at other Noh theaters such as the distribution of viewing guides and explanations of the plays by Noh performers as well as no-host parties after each performance.

In September 2003 a portion of the building's first floor was remodeled and named Kashinokibana. Meals and tea are served there when regular performances are held. Noh costumes, dolls, musical instruments, books and photographs are on display, and visitors can learn more about Noh by watching a video. Children and foreign students can get a taste of Noh on the stage or in Kashinokibana, making this a learning center and cosmopolitan source of information on Noh that is rare even in Japan.

On another note, every year the Hiroshima City of the Future Foundation holds a Noh workshop for children. Although run under the auspices of the local government, which places importance on treating each school of Noh even-handedly, instruction at the workshop is always left up to sisters Kinue, Fumie and Norie Oshima, who are all excellent teachers. One reason is that no other school of Noh could provide *hakama*, kimonos and fans for 100 children as the Oshima family does.

For years people have been sounding the alarm about the decline in the number of practitioners of Noh, but the efforts of the Oshima Noh Theater in provincial Fukuyama to promote Noh outstrip those of the many Noh theaters in the metropolitan Tokyo and Osaka areas. I highly recommend you take in one of the theater's performances, which are well worth seeing, or attend one of their workshops.

Nohgaku Times, Volume 743, February 1, 2013



「木賊」大島政允 (撮/池上嘉治)

### 大島能楽堂の 創建百周年記念能と その存在価値

亀川 幸郎

広島県東部に人口四十七万人の中核市の福山市があり、JR福山駅から南一キロに多流大島能楽堂がある。終戦間際の福山空襲(八月八日)で焼失したものの、三代目政久師匠が「小さくも能楽堂がなければ、地方の能楽盛況は果たせない」との執念を込めて二度も再建したものである(能楽堂公式ホームページ参照)。何の影もないが、福山や広島県のお宝、多流のお宝といっても過言ではない。

この多流能の個人所有の能楽堂は、一代目政幸太師匠が一九四八(三)年四月に創建して以来、百年を迎える。そこで少しばかり早い十二月二十日(日)、創建百周年記念能(通算第百三十六回)が開催され、全国も各々全国各地から来場者四百人であつた。

因みに定例能第一回は、一九五八(昭和三十三年三月)に羽法師大島久見「船弁慶」・多流長世(十六世)多流六平太宗孝で始まつている。遠方から出演者が呼ばれ、羽法師と赤字のはやが、実に五十五年有余に亘つて年四五回の演能の歴史を刻み続けているのだ。個人が継ぎつづける能は、他流と比べても年数・回数とすれば抜けていく。

長年の積と家族結出の普及活動が評価されたのが、十一月三日中国新聞社の「中国文化賞」がやと四代目政久師匠に、十一月七日「観世寿夫死去を悼む」学術賞、大島能楽堂への授与が発表された。ダブル受賞が百周年に間に合つて良かったが、率直な感慨である。

当日の主役は、「木賊」大島政允、稀勢野村萬歳。



「石橋・連獅子」塩津哲生、大島輝久 (撮/池上嘉治)

「石橋・連獅子」は、千分弱の半能だったが、百周年のお祝いに最も相応しい祝曲となつた。白頭が塩津哲生師(六十九歳)、赤頭が五代目輝久君(三十七歳)。二十一年に及ぶ師弟は息もぴったり合ひ、足使いや身体動きのキレのある、獅子獅子の舞いだつた。特に塩津師は全く景が乱れず、一瞥目に跳び上がった安座を決めた時は、観ているところが驚かされた。それに、囃子方(笛)杉本太朗、小鼓(吉阪)一朗、大鼓(亀井)忠、太鼓(前川)光(龍)の隊ノ拍子や乱序は、意匠、掛け声が自事といふ他は、短時間なのに

「石橋・連獅子」は、千分弱の半能だったが、百周年のお祝いに最も相応しい祝曲となつた。白頭が塩津哲生師(六十九歳)、赤頭が五代目輝久君(三十七歳)。二十一年に及ぶ師弟は息もぴったり合ひ、足使いや身体動きのキレのある、獅子獅子の舞いだつた。特に塩津師は全く景が乱れず、一瞥目に跳び上がった安座を決めた時は、観ているところが驚かされた。それに、囃子方(笛)杉本太朗、小鼓(吉阪)一朗、大鼓(亀井)忠、太鼓(前川)光(龍)の隊ノ拍子や乱序は、意匠、掛け声が自事といふ他は、短時間なのに

大いに気持ちが高つた。能楽鑑賞歴五十年の私は、大島との付き合いが二十一年になり、全国約六十所の能楽堂を訪れているが、大島能楽堂ほど気持ちの良い舞台を他には知らない。定例能は、一当主夫人幸三さんの気配り目配りが行き届いていて、家族総出(おもてなし)は、明るく暖かさに包まれていくからである。それに、鑑賞の手引き配布や能師による解説、終了後の舞物、髪用意であるのは大島だけ、他流では真似できないことだからである。

また、二〇〇三年九月の一階部分全面改修時に掲げられた「樞木端」は、定例能の時は食事や喫茶に使われるが、能装束や人形、楽器等、書籍、パネル写真などが展示されていて、映像を見ながら学ぶこともできる。子ども達も遊生は、能舞台と、この樞木端を

実体験ができる。全国でも珍しい研修施設、国際的情報発信地となっている。話が変わるが、広島市末来都市創造財団は、毎年子どもも賑わふ「教室」を開催している。しかし、各流儀の公平性を重んずる行政にあつても、この教室だけは、教え方も手い大島家の衣恵・文恵・知恵三姉妹に任せてある。子ども達も百人の仕舞袴や首物、髪用意であるのは大島だけ、他流では真似できないことだからである。

能大の口が少くはばれて久しいが、この福山という地方都市にある大島能楽堂の多彩な普及活動は、東京や関の教える見の価値を凌駕している。一見の価値があるこの能楽堂での鑑賞や体験教室をぜひお勧めしたい。

(ひろしま見所の会代志)